

# SOUTHERN ILLUSTRATED AGE

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VOL. I.—NO. 1.

RALEIGH, N. C., AUGUST 14, 1875.

PRICE 10 CENTS

## CURTIS HOOKS BROGDEN.

Curtis Hooks Brogden, the subject of this sketch, was born in the county of Wayne, North-Carolina, on the old homestead, about ten miles southwest of Goldsborough. He is the son of Pierce and Amy Brogden. The old homestead, now the property of Governor Brogden, descended from his paternal grandfather, Thos. Brogden, who was a soldier in the revolutionary war. He was of English and Scotch origin, and was noted for his physical strength and activity. He was full of good humor, and generous and kind to his friends and neighbors. He came from Maryland, and settled in Wayne county a short time before the revolutionary war. The maiden name of his wife was Pierce, and his son, Pierce Brogden, was the father of Governor Brogden. Pierce Brogden was an industrious, hard-working farmer, and of unblemished character through life. The mother of Governor Brogden was the daughter of John Beard, an Irishman, who possessed many of the noblest traits of the Irish character, and who never turned his back to a friend or a foe. She was a most excellent christian woman, and to her example and teachings may be traced that high moral character, and that reverence for the Holy Scriptures, for which her son has always been distinguished. Deeply devoted to her son, Curtis Hooks, she taught him the Lord's Prayer as soon as he was old enough to lisp the words, and she assiduously cultivated in his heart and mind from his earliest infancy the principles of truth, honesty and virtue. The father and the mother, who were thus devoted to the son, and who, in their humble sphere, incurred sacrifices and labors to fit him for future usefulness, did not live to witness his exaltation to the first office in the gift of the people of the State, but they were rendered happy before the close of their earthly career by seeing him respected by all for his talents and integrity, an honored member of the State Legislature, and the most popular man in his native county.

From a very early age Governor Brogden manifested a love of books and a desire to learn. Every moment he could spare from the labors of the farm was devoted to the acquisition of knowledge. By the blazing lightwood knot at night he pored over his books, committing much of the English classics in prose and poetry to memory, and turning them over in his mind and digesting them day by day as he followed the plow. He had neither time nor inclination for the usual diversions of many young men in the country, but he devoted himself to his work in the field and to books, and was promptly at preaching on Sunday, (being for many years a Sunday School teacher,) thus escaping the taint even of a frivolous and dissipated life. These severe habits, this devotion to duty, this rigid abstinence from everything savoring of dissipation, and this love of knowledge, joined to his candor and honesty of disposition, have made him what he is, and will place his name in the history of the State side by side with the names of ARTHUR DOCKERY, GOVERNOR JESSE FRANKLIN and NATHANIEL MAON.

Curtis was put by his father to following the plow at the early age of twelve years. He plowed and worked on the farm every summer, and attended a little subscription "old field school" after the crop was laid by. But, whether at school or at home, he never neglected his books. All the books he had were the Bible, the Columbian Orator, the American Preceptor, Murray's Grammar and Reader, the lives of Washington and Jackson, and Pike's Arithmetic. In this way he continued working and studying until at the age of eighteen he had obtained sufficient education to enable him to teach an "old field school," which he did with much acceptance to the neighbors, until he entered public life.

The manner of Governor Brogden's entrance into public life was extraordinary, and shows what industry and perseverance in well-doing

may accomplish. He had never been to a militia muster until he was eighteen, and was required to muster himself. The second time he attended he was elected Captain, and he afterwards rapidly rose, through regular gradations, to be Major-General of the militia. He had never seen a candidate for the Legislature until the day he declared himself a candidate, to wit: the 4th day of July, 1838. On that day he plowed until about eight o'clock in the morning, and then rode ten miles to the Court House, and after mustering three hours, he marched with his brother officers to the Court House, where the candidates for the Legislature announced themselves. After the candidates for the Senate had spoken, he handed his gun to a brother officer to hold, and at the request of his friends, stepped forward and announced himself for the House of Commons, in a speech which thrilled the audience, and won for him the title of the eloquent Plow Boy of Wayne county. He canvassed the county, and was elected to the House

mark, and was known as "Rough and Ready" in debate.

Governor Brogden was elected to one House or the other of the General Assembly at ten regular biennial elections in succession, which would have made a continuous service of twenty years in that body, if he had served out the last term in the Senate for which he was elected. While in the Legislature he was off all the most important committees, and was for a long time Chairman of the Committee on Claims and the Committee on Finance, two of the leading Committees. He was thus, as Chairman of these Committees, a faithful guardian of the Public Treasury.

Governor Brogden was a member of the House of Commons in 1848, soon after Ex-Governor Reid had broached the once famous issue of Free Suffrage. Free Suffrage was a proposition to amend the Constitution by legislative enactment, so as to confer on all the voters of the State the right to vote for Senators as well as Commoners. Governor Brog-

den warmly endorsed this proposition. It was stubbornly opposed by the Whigs, and they lost the State in 1850 by their opposition to it; nor were all the Democrats at first in favor of it. Some of the aristocratical portion of the latter party opposed it, and none of the leaders of that stamp would speak in favor of it during the session of 1848-49; but this had no effect on Curtis H. Brogden, save to stimulate him as an advocate of popular rights. He delivered a well-considered and able speech in favor of Free Suffrage, that is, political equality, and published it to his constituents and to the people of the State, and in 1858, twenty years afterwards, he followed the same principle of justice and equality in sustaining the reconstruction acts, which, like Governor Reid's Free Suffrage, conferred suffrage upon all.

At the session of 1856-57, while a member of the Senate, Governor Brogden was elected Comptroller of the State, to which office he was regularly re-elected every two years for ten years, receiving the support of all parties, and discharging the duties of said office to the entire satisfac-

tion of the people. The Legislature at each session examined his accounts, and invariably complimented him for the system, accuracy and neatness with which his accounts were kept.

Governor Brogden therefore served twenty years in the Legislature and ten years as Comptroller, thus making thirty years of continuous public service. Governor Brogden has never sought or accepted office except from the people or the Legislature.

In 1869, on account of his well-known character for honesty and integrity, he was appointed by President Grant, Collector of Internal Revenue for the Second District of this State, but he declined the appointment. This office was a lucrative one, and not sought by him. Indeed, he has never pushed himself for office of any kind, but has been content to leave himself in this respect in the hands of the people.

In 1868, when the Reconstruction Acts were put in operation and our present Constitution adopted, Governor Brogden was again elected to

eight and assumed the duties of Governor. His Inaugural on this occasion strengthened the confidence of his friends, and won for him the respect of men of all parties. He has steadily maintained in his administration the pledges which he made in his Inaugural; and while he has been and still is a decided Republican in his convictions and principles, his devotion to his native State, his honesty of disposition, his simplicity of manner and character, and his sense of justice as exhibited in his official conduct, have secured for him the confidence and esteem of all.

In 1868 Governor Brogden was an Elector on the Grant and Colfax ticket. He made a full canvass of his District, was chosen President of the Electoral College when it met in Raleigh, in December, to cast the vote, and on taking the Chair delivered an able and eloquent address. He was also, in 1869, a State Director on the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad. In 1868 he was appointed a Trustee of the University. He also presided for several years as Justice of Wayne County Court, with credit to himself and usefulness to his county. Having read law, and made himself acquainted with its great principles, statutory and common, he was peculiarly qualified to preside as a Justice; and though he obtained license, yet he was so constantly in the public service, at the call of the people, that he had but little time to devote to the practice.

We have thus traced the life of the Wayne County Plow Boy from his entrance on public life in 1838 to the present time. His life presents a bright example for the imitation of the poor boys of our State. It should encourage them to be diligent and faithful workers with head and hand, as he has been; to be truthful, patient, honest, careful, economical; to avoid frivolity and dissipation of all kinds; to cultivate and improve their minds and hearts by study and meditation, and thus make themselves, as they grow up and enter on manly life, respectable citizens, ornaments to society, and useful public men.

"Lives of great men all remind us  
We can make our lives sublime,  
And, departing, leave behind us  
Footprints on the sands of time."

Governor Brogden commenced public life as an ingrained Union Jackson Democrat. He has always maintained, as he understands them, the great principles of Jefferson and Jackson. He has always believed that the government belongs to the people, and that they have a right, under just and equal laws, to manage their affairs in their own way. Equal rights to all, special favors to none is his motto. His sympathies have always been with the masses of the people. Hence his advocacy of Free or Manhood Suffrage in 1848 and in 1868. Hence his opposition to imprisonment for debt, except for fraud, and his support of homesteads and exemptions from execution for the unfortunate. And he loves the honor of his native State so well, and is so honest himself as a man, that he has uniformly and warmly opposed every thing that savored of repudiation of just debts. His messages and State papers, his speeches at the Charlotte celebration and elsewhere, show that the Wayne County Plow Boy is not the inferior in mental power of any of his predecessors. If he has not been trained in all the learning of the schools, he is nevertheless a well-read man in law, literature and general history, and possesses a large fund of general knowledge, and has that strong common sense which bridges every chasm in the path of duty, and conducts him to fortunate results. Industry and devotion to duty are his characteristics. He never acts in matters large or small, except after due reflection; and the public may, therefore, know that whatever he does or omits to do is the result of careful, pains-taking thought, and proceeds from a disposition to do right.

In person Governor Brogden is about the medium height, strongly built, with blue eyes, rather florid complexion, and with brownish or auburn hair. He is now in the prime of life. Inheriting from his ancestors a robust constitution, early and con-



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by the largest majority ever given to any candidate in Wayne. The name and fame of this poor and obscure Plow Boy spread rapidly, and he was politically the child of many fathers. But petted as he was, and popular as he was from the very start, he never lost his balance, was never puffed up as a man of consequence, but bore himself modestly as one of the people, from whose loins he had sprung. This was before he had voted, or was old enough to vote. It so happened that our friend, the Governor, when he handed that gun to his friend to hold, and made that speech in old Waynesborough, took "fortune at the flood," and he has been riding on it ever since. Through all the fluctuations of parties since that time, his unprecedented popularity in his native county has never forsaken him in a single instance. When he first took his seat in the House of Commons he was the youngest member of that body, but in a House containing such men as William A. Graham, Michael Hoke, Kenneth Rayner, William Eaton, Robert B. Gilliam, David Reid, Hamilton C. Jones, Spier Whitaker and others, he soon made his

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